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## WILDLIFE SERVICES—SOUTH CAROLINA

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### USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in South Carolina

Every day, residents, industries, organizations and agencies call on South Carolina Wildlife Services (WS) for help in protecting agriculture, human health and safety, natural resources, and property from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologist, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

WS biologists address serious beaver damage to South Carolina's transportation infrastructure, crops, timber, and natural resources. In addition, WS protects pilots, passengers, and aircraft from dangerous wildlife collisions with airplanes at civilian airports and military installations; protects endangered loggerhead turtles from predation; and manages damage caused by vultures, pigeons, starlings, Canada geese, white-tailed deer, and other wildlife.

#### Top 5 Major Assistance Activities:

- Protecting transportation infrastructure, timber, crops, and natural resources from beaver damage
- Protecting public safety, aircraft, and military operations from wildlife hazards at airports
- Managing problems caused by urban white-tailed deer
- Managing damage caused by migratory birds (i.e., Canada geese and vultures)
- Protecting threatened and endangered species from predators

#### Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to South Carolina:

- Productivity and reproductive success of beavers in the Southeastern United States
- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing problems caused by vultures
- Managing bird predation to aquaculture and sport fisheries
- Evaluating and monitoring wildlife diseases such as pseudorabies, swine brucellosis, classic swine fever, and avian influenza in wild, migratory birds and mammals



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### Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

While WS conducts a wide range of operational and research activities, a few in-depth examples are provided to highlight WS' role in protecting air travel, preventing beaver damage, aiding endangered species and providing assistance with management of damage from urban white-tailed deer, vultures and other wildlife.

**Protecting Transportation, Timber, Crops, and Natural Resources**—WS provides direct assistance in multiple South Carolina counties to remove beavers that cause flooding in timber, crops, and on roadways. By managing beaver damage, WS saves several million dollars annually in South Carolina resources. These "savings" are measured

mostly in terms of losses avoided as a result of managing the damage.

WS provides training to the public for integrated beaver damage management by participating in workshops around the State and by working with the public on an individual basis.

WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC) conducts studies to identify new technology to manage beaver damage. Nonlethal damage management methods, such as pond levelers and exclusionary devices, have been evaluated. Other research includes modifying current equipment so that it is selective as possible. Equipment selectivity reduces the number of animals, other than beaver that are impacted by these devices. Additionally, South Carolina WS is assisting in a study investigating productivity and reproductive success of beavers in the Southeastern United States.

**Protecting Human Health and Safety at Airports**—WS is recognized nationally and internationally for its scientific expertise in reducing wildlife hazards to the aviation industry. WS provides direct and technical assistance to several Department of Defense facilities and civilian airports throughout the State. Technical assistance to airports includes initial consultations, the development of wildlife hazard assessments and wildlife hazard manage-

ment plans, and the training of airport personnel to reduce the risk of wildlife collisions with aircraft. Direct assistance projects involve the management of animals hazardous to aircraft operations at the site. All of these efforts serve to reduce the potential costs and danger associated with wildlife strikes.

In South Carolina, black vultures and many turkey vultures are year-round residents. A segment of the turkey vulture population is migratory and makes long-distance seasonal movements between winter areas and breeding grounds farther north. Recently, an F-18 reported a turkey vulture strike about 1.5 miles out from the Marine Corps Air Station in Beaufort, causing approximately \$300,000 in damages to the right engine. The Air Station has funded a telemetry study to analyze the hazard posed by vultures to base aircraft which will be a collaboration with NWRC's Gainesville, Florida field station and the SC WS program.

**Protecting Natural Resources**—South Carolina's barrier islands provide valuable habitat for the federally threatened loggerhead sea turtle. Yawkey Wildlife Management Area, North Island, has a high density of nesting loggerhead sea turtles. Erosion and heavy predation from feral hogs have significantly decreased the hatch success of the nests laid. WS works cooperatively with the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources to protect loggerhead sea turtle, which is an integral part of the recovery of the northern sub-population.

**Addressing Property Damage Caused by Roosting Vultures**—Black and turkey vultures congregate in large roosts, often containing hundreds of birds. Vulture problems are one of the leading wildlife complaints received by

the South Carolina WS because vulture roosts are frequently located in residential areas. The accumulation of droppings on homes, vehicles, and boats is a health concern. Property damage to shingles, boat covers, and awnings from homes and businesses is also common. South Carolina WS assists towns and the communication industry by dispersing roosts and helping local officials obtain Federal and State permits to remove vultures in an effort to reinforce harassment programs. WS also provides bird-scaring equipment and technical assistance.

**Urban White-tailed Deer Management**—As people have developed rural areas, conflicts with white-tailed deer have increased dramatically. Urban sprawl combined with the adaptability of deer, have created conflicts that pose significant challenges. Urban forests and parks provide a sanctuary for deer populations, which then move into surrounding neighborhoods. While deer are a charismatic species and often held as symbols of harmony with nature, residents quickly and directly experience the reality of deer overpopulation. Deer destroy residential landscaping, increase the risk of deer/vehicle accidents, and increase the threat of tick-borne diseases being transmitted to pets and people. WS works with communities experiencing deer conflicts to provide residents with information on urban deer management. Recommendations are tailored to meet the concerns of the community.

**Urban Canada Geese Management**—Resident Canada geese problems continue to increase in the State. Concerns include the accumulation of droppings on turf, water quality, and aggressive geese that nest around buildings. In addition, golf courses, parks, and other recreational areas experience extensive damage to turf, fair-ways, and greens from feeding birds. WS biologists help the public through direct assistance and one-on-one advice. WS removes birds, which are then donated to local food banks.

## Looking to the Future

WS provides the citizens of South Carolina with safe, effective, and humane assistance for a diverse range of wildlife conflicts, but the need for support is on-going.

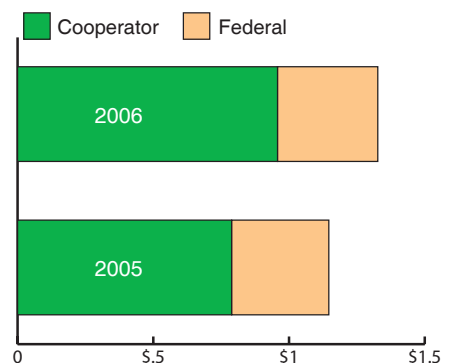
The demand for beaver management continues to increase. While the desire and expertise to provide services is great, some counties cannot afford to enter into a cooperative agreement with WS to secure beaver management assistance.

The vulture population in the southeastern United States has risen dramatically in recent years, which coincides with a sharp rise in the number of requests for assistance received by WS. Additionally, requests for airport assistances have increased in recent years and new concerns have surfaced over double-crested cormorants impacting native fisheries in the State. A trained airport biologist/bird biologist is needed so that WS can respond effectively to these issues.

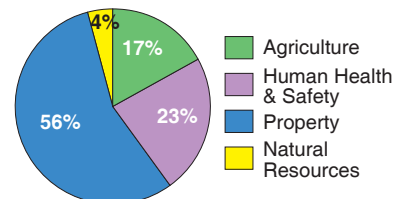
## South Carolina Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators who have a vested interest in the program: private individuals, businesses, and other Federal, State, and local government agencies. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

Total Funding (Millions)



Resources Protected % of Total Funds



### Major Cooperators

- Clemson University
- Columbia Metropolitan Airport
- Horry County Stormwater Department
- Marlboro/Darlington County
- Marine Corps Air Station-Beaufort
- Myrtle Beach International Airport
- South Carolina Department of Natural Resources
- South Carolina Department of Transportation
- Kershaw County
- City of Columbia

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